

## **THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN MANITOU SPRINGS!**

In connection with the \$1,100,000 Canon Avenue drainage project, our contractor has begun installing the 7x7 foot precast sections of box culvert to alleviate future flood problems from Williams Creek. Our Public Services Department and Colorado Springs Utilities have installed new water, sewer and gas mains and conduit for future undergrounding of electric and cable television services. We distributed notices to all properties affected by temporary shutoff of utilities and set up a “hotline” to provide updated information on an ongoing basis. We are holding weekly project progress meetings with the contractor and our engineers. The project is scheduled to be completed by July 15.

The mandated Stormwater Phase II Plan and Permit Application was submitted March 10<sup>th</sup> and we received an approval of the proposed 5-Year Plan. The suggestions submitted by members of City Council were incorporated and the costs to implement are in the approved 2003 Budget. The consultants that prepared the application were paid by El Paso County as a part of the overall County Stormwater Phase II Plan—saving the City more than \$30,000 in fees.

On February 25<sup>th</sup> City Council discussed the “Top 10” Goals for the remainder of this year and for the year 2004. Under each of these broad goals were a number of projects or programs suggested by members of City Council, City department managers and members of City boards and commissions. On March 11<sup>th</sup> City Council reviewed the goals and prioritized them—but with the understanding that most of the individual programs will be developed concurrently and many are ongoing.

### **1. Protect our water sources, obtain additional water and promote water conservation**

On March 24<sup>th</sup> we met with our City Engineer to discuss telemetry equipment or other alternatives to facilitate better use of our existing water supply, testing of our distribution system for leaks and review of the accuracy of our water meters. Our Engineer is preparing a letter of recommendations for presentation to the City Council as to what water system improvements will have the highest cost-benefit return.

On March 27<sup>th</sup> we submitted the formal application to the Southeast Colorado Water Conservancy District for 300 acre feet of additional water. While this water would not be in the City’s watershed and water system directly, if it is allotted the City will have water with which to trade for water in our watershed.

As a part of the ongoing program to conserve water we do have, the City Council authorized the Mayor to appoint a “Water Conservation Committee” to prepare recommendations regarding ways to conserve water. The committee will review sample printed materials gathered by City staff on drought-resistant landscaping, water saving ideas and methods of communicating our conservation program.

The City’s Master Gardener, Susan Guynn, is preparing a plan to install drought-resistant landscaping in the front of City Hall. The City Public Services Department is actively investigating costs to install mulched materials in our parks to cover the areas in which the grass has died for lack of water. The objective is to cover the ground with natural materials which will control mud and dust, but be available to be tilled into the soil for future replanting of grass. We have completed one mulch demonstration project in the northeast corner of Memorial Park.

2. Assist the Manitou Springs Economic Development Council in implementing the proposed Business Improvement District

We continue to work with the Manitou Springs Economic Development Council (“EDC”) Board of Directors and their Executive Director, Kitty Clemens, to plan for the creation of the proposed Business Improvement District (“BID”) and the anticipated redevelopment plan for the downtown business area. Last year, and again for 2003, the City is contributing \$69,240 per year of funding to the EDC.

The EDC Executive Director is participating in our weekly Department Manager’s meeting to communicate and coordinate the needs of the business area with other City programs.

3. Renovate or demolish the Historic Spa Building

On April 15, 1999 the El Paso County Regional Building Department declared the Historic Spa to be a “dangerous building” due to numerous Fire Code and Building Code violations. Accordingly, the City had the building vacated until the code violations were corrected. On April 29<sup>th</sup> of that year there was a flood on Canon Avenue which inundated the building. In July of 1999 the Regional Building Department issued a Demolition Order. Since that date, the City has met more than 15 times with a developer regarding his proposal to renovate the building and correct the Code violations. Obviously the renovation has not occurred; the building has deteriorated further and is a significant blight in the core of the City.

The City Attorney researched the current legal status of the subject property and we met with the holders of the debt and other parties claiming to have an interest in the property. We obtained updated inspection reports from the Regional Building department, the County Health Department and the City of Manitou Springs Fire and Police Departments.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> the City Council held a public meeting to hear comments regarding the options for demolition or renovation of the Spa Building. The City Council has set a Special Meeting for April 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss the options available to the City.

4. Implement programs to increase revenues for businesses and for the City

This is an ongoing program with the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce (“CofC”) to increase the number of visitors and locals to Manitou businesses. We have invited Leslie Lewis, the CofC Executive Director, to meet each week with our Department Managers to better communicate and coordinate our activities.

5. Develop and implement an ongoing program for “beautification” of the downtown area

During March we had the exterior of City Hall repainted (the first time in more than 15 years) and our Public Services Department staff repainted the interior of Memorial Hall, refinished the floor, installed new cabinets and countertops in the kitchen and repainted the lobby of City Hall. They have started repainting the ornamental trash containers and will soon start repainting the parking zone curbs in the downtown business area.

This past week 22 volunteers from the Colorado Department of Corrections “Wildland Fire Team”, completed a clean up of Fountain Creek from the west side of Manitou to the Fields Park at El Paso and Beckers Lane. Our Public Services Department provided boots, tools, dump trucks and portable toilets to support the project. The City realized more than \$10,000 of free labor from this volunteer project.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> we met with members of the Manitou & Midland Railroad Club to organize a volunteer project to repaint Cog Engine # 2 located across from City Hall. The city will provide the materials and the Railroad Club has indicated they will complete the repainting by Memorial Day at no cost to the City for their labor.

6. Assist in providing additional off-street parking

We have ordered the standard blue “P” signs to identify the public parking lots, ordered more “3 Hour” parking signs and have organized the summer season parking enforcement program.

We are working with the Manitou Springs Metropolitan District to refinance their existing bonds to save interest cost. We have proposals from two financing sources which would save the District more than \$34,000 in future interest. We will continue to work with the District to analyze their current revenue stream from District property taxes and parking fees—which could support additional debt for future acquisitions of additional off-street parking.

7. Review the 2003 Budgeted staffing and compensation for City employees

During March the City hired two new Police Officers and two Dispatchers to fill positions in the 2003 Budget that were vacant due to resignations. We advertised and have received applications for two Public Service Department Maintenance Workers—also to fill budgeted positions that are vacant due to resignations.

The City’s independent auditor completed the annual audit for the fiscal year 2002 and identified that the City saved \$73,000 from the 2002 budget. After making all TABOR and other reserve adjustments, the carryover balance was \$65,000 more than anticipated when the 2003 Budget was adopted. For the first quarter of 2003, we have spent \$55,000 less than the comparable period last year. Since the current year budget did not provide for any “cost of living” adjustments for employees, City Council authorized a cost of living adjustment funded by a portion of this carryover balance and 2003 budget savings.

8. Prepare a 5-year Capital Improvements and financing plan

We are analyzing our needs for equipment replacements and capital infrastructure needs. We have discussed with our auditors the capital asset records required by the Government Accounting Standards Board pronouncement # 34 with which the City must comply by 2004. The 5-Year Capital Improvements Plan will be presented to City Council with the proposed 2004 Budget later this year.

We met with one financing source to discuss alternative possibilities for financing future capital needs. Alternatives for funding the capital improvements will be included in the 5-Year Plan.

9. Enhance the “image” of Manitou Springs

In addition to the “beautification” projects noted under that goal (# 5, above), we reviewed the status of rebuilding the East Archway—which is waiting for Colorado Department of Transportation approval (since Manitou Ave. is a State highway). We are obtaining construction bids and expect to have the project completed, with all bills paid, no later than September 30<sup>th</sup> 2003.

For the Memorial Day and Fourth of July holidays, the City has ordered red, white and blue banners to hang across Manitou Avenue in the downtown area, to be paid from a donation made last year by the Cliff House.

During March we received one proposal to improve the City web site and are waiting for additional proposals. We intend to make the web site more informative, have current City Department reports that can be easily updated each month, and have links to the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce and other City-related web sites

10. Develop plans and financing for a Mineral Springs pool

At this time no additional work has been completed on this goal, although the City continues to maintain the mineral springs for which Manitou is famous.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to say how pleased I am to have the opportunity to “come home” to the City of Manitou Springs. This first quarter of 2003 has been a time for me to become reacquainted with the City staff with whom I worked while serving as the City’s Finance Director nearly three years ago. I look forward to helping the City Council, the several advisory boards and commissions, and the many volunteers working to make Manitou Springs an even better place in which to live.

Fred Burmont

City Administrator